

R E F U G E

F O R

THE PRISONER OF HOPE:

O R,

CHRIST THE SANCTUARY

F O R

T R O U B L E D S O U L S.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

With a RECOMMENDATORY PREFACE,
By R O W L A N D H I L L, M. A.

Turn ye to the strong Hold; ye Prisoners of Hope, Zach. ix. 12.
He shall be for a Sanctuary, Isa. viii. 14.

When boist'rous Winds, and stormy Billows roar,
Disturb the Deep, and rend the rocky Shore,
The foaming Seas in swelling Mountains rise,
Forfake their Caverns, and attempt the Skies:
Ere long succeeds the placid Calm serene,
And stops the Progress of the frightful Scene;
The rolling Waves in gentler Currents glide,
And softly murmur down the ebbing Tide.

L O N D O N:

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P R E F A C E.

Courteous Reader,

HOW happy is the man that can assume this character to himself, A SINNER SAVED! Stop and consider—is it thine? O then what miracles of mercies have been revealed to thy heart! The world by nature know nothing of our Immanuel; but the convinced sinner knows that he is lost without him; he sees that he cannot be more completely fallen, or more certain of destruction than he is in himself. This strikes at the root of all his self-righteous pride, and compels him to cry out, as with the prophet of old, “Woe is me, for I am undone!” Isa. vi. 5. He now trembles at justice, and prays for mercy. He sees nothing else but flaming vengeance held forth by the Law; and he owns that he deserves it as his portion for his iniquities. His legal hopes from a covenant of works now fall to the ground. Then it is the Lord the Spirit divinely convinces him of the work of Jesus; he sees it, and is enabled, as his faith increases, to rest satisfied with the fulness of it: he rejoices in the dignity of it, and is happy in the security of it. This teaches him boldly to renounce all his home-spun righteousness as dung and dross: he dares not bring it as a condition at first, or as a wretched adjunct to complete the whole at last: No; he renounces it wholesale, and is enabled to rest only upon Jesus as his everlasting All. But does he not upon these principles renounce the law? Yes, as a covenant of works he renounces it altogether; for “he is dead to the law through the body of Christ, that he may be married to another.” But does he renounce it also as a rule of life? No, by no means; for in this point of view he is still under the law to Christ;

P R E F A C E.

Christ; and love to Christ makes him return obedience as his privilege. Besides, among his New-Testament blessings, he has given him in covenant, with Christ his head; a new; i. e. an obedient heart. O blessed are they, then, that believe in Jesus; they have all things, the best of things, and all too for nothing! Just such terms as these, Reader, will do for you and me, who have nothing to look for but grace and mercy from first to last. And if these be the sentiments of thy heart, and my worthless name can have any avail, let me not be thought arrogant, if, to oblige some friends, I should venture to recommend this little gospel letter to thy perusal. The intent of it is kind; it is for the mourners in Zion: And why do they mourn? They dare not believe. Why dare they not believe? Their self-righteousness forbids them. This letter, however, will tell them of a balm for their wounds which can heal them completely; but the Holy Ghost alone can give them grace to apply it. Let them therefore pray first and read next, and who knows but, through God's blessing, the gospel-day may break forth into their souls, to the banishment of their sorrows, and to the enlargement of their joys. If this should be thy portion, ascribe the glory to God; but be thankful for the author, and pray for the prefacer, who, though unworthy, yet is, for Christ's sake,

Thine sincerely,

ROWLAND HILL,

Tabernacle-House,

Aug. 29th, 1772

REFUGEE
FOR THE
PRISONER OF HOPE, &c.
DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR distress cannot fail to excite the tender feelings of humanity, nor to raise the soft emotions of compassion. I feel most sensibly your pressing trials; indeed it cannot be otherwise, as they bring to remembrance those moments of my life which formerly were spent in the most abject state of misery and wretchedness. But shall I urge this as the only stimulative to pity? No, this may heighten my concern, yet surely I need no other inducement, than that natural sympathy which is implanted in the human breast. Were it not so, my insensibility must alarm my friend, and lead her to lament my want of those sensations which empower the soul to feel for the real sufferings of others. Indeed this would be highly reasonable, as that man, whose compassion never strayed beyond the narrow bounds of self, certainly deserves our pity. I might here mention my own trials, which, if possible, were far more distressing than yours; but alas, what can this avail LAVINIA? her troubles are too personal to suffer any alleviation by my commiseration, and too severe to be lessened by a faint recital of a more despe-

rate distress. But must I then be silent? No, humanity forbids the thought. It shall be the subject of this epistle to direct my amiable Friend to that God, who is the sinner's refuge, and the only source of real happiness and comfort.

Those depressions of guilt, under which you groan, are the natural consequence of sin, and nothing more than what frequently occur, when the soul is brought to see what an accursed thing it is in the sight of God. Remember formerly, though equally guilty, you enjoyed the most perfect tranquillity, remained happy in the possession of the same corrupt nature, and peaceable when in the most imminent danger. This consideration no doubt will make your present sufferings more intolerable, yet I trust not insupportable, because you have just reason to conclude that they are the work of God. The struggles of natural conscience rarely strike conviction so deep, or are of so long duration; therefore I hope your dark night of distress is a kind prelude of that bright morning, when JESUS, the Sun of righteousness, shall arise and shine into your soul unto the perfect day. Then, LAVINIA,

Thy soul immers'd from nature's night

Shall view the dawning ray,

With splendid beams of genial light

Bring in the welcome day;

The healing sweets of Gilead's balm

Thy wounded soul shall prove,

And ev'ry ruder thought be calm,

Subdu'd by conqu'ring love.

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Let not unbelief suggest, "this is impossible," for with this almighty Saviour all things are possible. His resplendent beams can penetrate the dark recesses of the heart, eradicate the gloomy horrors of guilt, and usher in the glorious, the welcome day of gospel grace. He will make darkness light before you; he will shew you the infinite fulness of his abounding grace, and revive your drooping spirit with the sweet communications of his everlasting love. He will apply the rich pardon of his invaluable blood, which will soften all the hard workings of unbelief, and prove a healing balsam for all the maladies of sin.

Seeing, my disconsolate friend, we have such a great and glorious Physician, let me exhort you to turn to this Jesus, to this "strong hold, thou PRISONER OF HOPE." Turn to him for free pardon, full redemption, for compleat victory over every trial, difficulty, and temptation, and he will bring you off more than conqueror. He is a merciful, kind, and compassionate Saviour, and ever stands with open arms to receive the returning sinner. This glorious Captain of our salvation, is the only ground and object of hope: He is the ETERNAL GOD, he is the sinners refuge, and "underneath them are his everlasting arms." Then let me exhort you to flee to this shelter, that you may avoid the impending storm, and be eternally saved from the wrath and avenging Justice of a justly incensed God. Here you will find freedom from the condemning power of a violated law, which thundereth out its curses against every one who continueth not in all things that are written, to do them."

Should you say, you are weak, and incapable of fleeing to this Saviour, there is a word of encouragement which must animate your hopes, and strengthen your desires, " His everlasting arms are underneath you." Can you sink when upheld by omnipotence? can you faint under the benign influences of such almighty succour? No, it is impossible; hence it is, that you are exhorted not to fear, for thus saith the Lord, " I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, I will help thee, yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness." Such invaluable words of promise are like a fortress to the desponding soul, they insure safety in every situation, and make its state equally certain under every trial. Were not this the case, you must fall under the pressure of your distress, and sink into absolute despair: But these, like a shield, preserve the poor tempted soul; and when assaulted, prevent it from being utterly cast down. These comfortable supports were all provided and secured in the eternal covenant. Hence it is, that they are now made manifest, and stand firm as a rock for ever. Thus all the spiritual seed are effectually secured from destroying wrath, adopted into the family of God, and made partakers of a crown of glory which is incorruptible, and that faileth not away. From this unfathomable well flow the healing streams of divine comfort and consolation. This, my friend, is like an anchor to the drooping soul, when brought steadfastly to rely upon it, and the means which it effectually secures, for compleat salvation. In this glorious transaction, the divine Redeemer undertook to supply the wants, and to fulfil

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all his covenant engagements for the many sons he was appointed to bring to glory. But hath he done it? yes, he hath redeemed them with his precious blood; "he hath finished transgression, made an end of sin, and brought in an everlasting righteousness" for their justification.

Now, my friend, what think you of this great Redeemer, this all sufficient, this suitable Saviour? His blood is of infinite value, and cleanses from the foulest crimes: surely this must make him suitable indeed, especially when we consider, that the merit of his death extends to every case, let the circumstances be what they may. Are you weary and heavy laden? Are you burdened with the intolerable pressure of tormenting guilt? Do you find yourself unable to support such a ponderous weight? Then to you is the word of this salvation sent. It is to such distressed souls the compassionate Saviour speaks, where he saith, "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." This surely is the most endearing testimony of divine love. It is stript of every thing that might discourage the afflicted conscience, expressive of the most hearty welcome, and replete with the strongest consolation. This wondrous declaration opens a door of hope for the most desperate, the most abandoned sinners, who, sensible of their crimes, are brought to melt with deep contrition for the enormities of a vicious, abandoned life, and the horrid depravity of a corrupted nature. Their sins, however aggravated, however flagitious, are nothing before this great ZERUBBABEL, this almighty Saviour; they must flee

at his presence, they shall become a plain, and leave the wondring soul, delighted with the pleasing prospect of assured happiness. He hath left no claim on the part of sinners unsatisfied, having fulfilled all the demands of law and justice, cancelled the hand writing which stood out against them, and brought in an everlasting righteousness for their compleat salvation. This glorious Redeemer will appear still more lovely, when we consider, that he not only frees from the condemnation, but also from the power and guilt of sin. View him in his mediatorial office, and he appears qualified to answer every want, every exigency; therefore he will render unto you double, a more than adequate repayment for all your present troubles, even a fulness of grace and a kingdom of glory. Your trials are of short date, which may fitly be compared to the early dawning of the day; and however clouded your hopes may seem, yet I think you have reason to rejoice, because he hath promised that he "will not despise the day of small things." No; LAVINIA, "he will not break the bruised reed;" which is expressive of the tenderness of Christ, but he will uphold you with the right hand of his righteousness, and pour into your wounded conscience the balm of Gilead, his precious blood. He hath likewise promised, that "he will not quench the smoking flax;" which is justly applicable to your present state, and a fit representation of the small beginnings of his grace upon the soul. This is a strong image; which is truly descriptive of those struggles between nature and grace, when the soul is tempted and buffeted, but not utterly cast down. Then it is that he will pour into the soul the oil of grace,

grace, and, by the sweet influences of his eternal Spirit, blow the latent spark into a flame of divine love. Seeing this is the case, doubt no more; cast away your fears, he hath begun a good work in you, therefore he will preserve you; for he is a **ROCK**, and his work is perfect. His grace is the sure, the happy earnest of future glory, and remaineth as a well of water springing up into everlasting life. My dear friend, believing this to be your blessed portion, I may justly say, "Turn to this strong hold, thou **PRISONER OF HOPE**." Jesus is the almighty Saviour; his promises are more firm than rocks or mountains; he is strong in his divine love, and able to supply all your wants. This to the burdened soul is matter of great joy, nor will it appear strange when we consider what it is that we are delivered from, even the pollutions of an ensnaring world, the condemning power of sin, and that eternal punishment which is the just reward of those who are found living and dying in the habitual practice of it. Seeing this is the sinner's privilege, let me exhort you to come to this Jesus, this city of refuge; he stands ready to receive you, and will most assuredly embrace you with the arms of his mercy. His word cries to the sinner, who is parched with the scorching torments of a guilty conscience, "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come to the waters of life; come and drink of these refreshing, these cooling streams, they will allay the spiritual thirst of the returning soul, and make the barren wilderness a standing pool." Do you say, You have nothing to bring which may entitle you to a part in this blessed offer? Then to you it comes freely; for it is to them "who have

have no money," to those who stand stript of every ornament, every thing that formerly appeared valuable; such are the persons who are exhorted to come, " to buy wine and milk without money, and without price." Come naked, and he will cloath you; cast off the filthy rags of your own supposed righteousness, and he will put upon you the garments of salvation, and make you a partaker of everlasting glory. Hesitate not one moment, but flee to this compassionate Saviour " and he will have mercy upon you, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Turn to him through the mediation of a Saviour's blood, and you cannot fail; no, you shall assuredly find a free pardon of all your sins, and an abundance of grace to supply all your wants. There is no condition, no pre-requisite demanded, the words surpass even the utmost stretch of our desires, therefore no unworthiness can exclude you from claiming a part in this absolute promise. It is true, you are exhorted to turn, but then this is not to be the condition on which depends the safety of your state; but on the contrary, is mentioned as a sweet motive to induce the soul to come and close in with so kind an offer. This is what effectually secures all the glory to God, and constitutes the offer wholly an offer of grace. Argue not the blackness of your crimes, for this is to limit OMNIPOTENCE; this would be to arraign his wisdom, and to dispute the rich displays of his boundless mercy. Your thinking there can be no pardon for you, proves nothing, since God hath declared, " My thoughts are not as your thoughts;" No, LAVINIA, the distressed sinner thinks of nothing but wrath, tribulation and

and anguish, when the thoughts of God are love, mercy and peace. "Neither are your ways as my ways, saith the Lord:" Your ways are nothing but sin, but my ways are ways of pleasantness, and all my paths replete with peace, love, and grace. Then what should hinder you from embracing this glorious Saviour? He is the friend of sensible sinners; their advocate, full of grace and truth. He sees them from afar, wandering in the paths of iniquity, wallowing in sensual pleasures, and basking in the sun shine of an ensnaring world. Here he finds all his apostate sons, views them with unspeakable compassion, and sweetly draws them with the cords of his attracting love. But who are the objects of this special care, the self-righteous, who think they stand in need of nothing? No, "publicans and harlots enter into the kingdom of heaven sooner than they." It is the returning sinner, even the most notorious, the vilest of the vile; therefore he is emphatically stiled, a Saviour of the Chief of sinners.

Now, my friend, you find yourself a vile sinner; then to you belong these comfortable words, for saith the divine Redeemer, "I came not to call the righteous (those who think themselves so) but SINNERS to repentance;" to you he speaks and saith, "Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee: I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own name's sake." There is no worthiness on the sinner's part that can move him to the exercise of such stupendous love; no, he doth it of his own good pleasure; and no other reason can be thought of, save that already

ready given by the inspired penman, namely, that the whole of salvation, from first to last, "might redound to the praise of the glory of his grace." Are you kept in bondage and held in subjection by the power of guilt? The word of Jesus proclaims liberty to such captives, "He hath led captivity captive, he hath received gifts for men." What, for the self-judiciary? No, for rebellious sinners, "that the Lord God might dwell among them." This, my amiable friend, was the effect of divine love; it was this that brought upon Jesus the heavy wrath of his eternal Father, and made him suffer the shameful and accursed death of the cross. But for whom did he undergo this wretched misery? for himself? No; he did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth, but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. His stripes! O what words are these! what an humiliating consideration! the sufferings of an incarnate God, is the balsam that heals the malady of sin, and puts a stop to all that vengeance which hangs over the guilty head of offending man. Come, then, LAVINA, here is joyful news indeed, here is a word of the strongest encouragement; "the Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the waters of life freely." Let not a sense of your unworthiness hinder you from taking comfort from these endearing words. Could you enumerate a catalogue of the blackest crimes, even those which are shocking to human nature, they are nothing before the BLOOD of JESUS. There is in it

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virtue and efficacy sufficient to cleanse the filthy soul, and make it "white as snow." The blessed apostle, when writing to his Corinthian brethren, does not forget to put them in mind of what they formerly were, nor is he ashamed to enumerate their shocking crimes, and therefore he declares, "neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extorters, shall inherit the kingdom of God;" no, nothing that is unclean can enter there: yet many of these were sons by adoption and grace, therefore he adds, "and such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." O my friend, how amazing is the love, grace, and mercy of God! We have here an enumeration of the foulest crimes; yet those filthy souls were washed both from the impurity and defilement of them, and made meet for the heavenly inheritance. Surely this must constrain us to cry with astonishment and wonder, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!"

My friend, seeing this is the case, seek not to frustrate the abundances of God's free grace: go to this reconciled Father just as you are, take all your sins, all your guilt and lay them upon the head of Christ, who is a sin-bearing Saviour; he will carry them into a land of forgetfulness, to be remembered no more for ever. O! he is a compassionate high-priest; "he is touched

touched with the feeling of our infirmities, therefore he knows how to succour those who are tempted. He hath declared further, "He who cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out," now this is an infallible truth, heaven and earth shall pass away, but the word of our God shall not pass away, but endure for ever. Then do you not give God the lye, when you dispute his mercy, and think he will not receive you? Most certainly. O my friend, reject the thought, believe this comfortable testimony, and go to Christ with this prevalent plea, "God be merciful to me a sinner," and he will not, nay he cannot cast you off.

Your concluding there can be no hope of mercy, argues a want of the knowledge of God, and the way he hath appointed for the salvation of sinners. With him there is mercy and plenteous redemption; and when you are enabled to see the spirituality of his righteous law, the purity of its precepts, and the extent of its requirements, you will find to your unspeakable comfort, that we all stand upon a perfect level. The least transgressor falls under its condemning power, which can only be said of the most notorious offender. If we search into the origin of this grand and comfortable truth, we must advert to the primæval state of our unfortunate progenitors. They were created upright, had a nature free from the impurity of sin, and were capable of abiding in the enjoyment of their happy paradise. But, alas, the tryal of their filial obedience, through the temptation of satan, is soon transformed into the most heinous act of rebellion. Their listening to the insidious wiles

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kingdom of his heavenly Father. Then surely you may say,

O let his hope be all my trust,

The object of his faith be mine!

Then shall thy poor unworthy dust,

Like him thy ransom'd sinner shine.

My dear friend, I have already exceeded the bounds of moderation, and, I fear, trespassed too much on your patience; therefore must conclude. Let me, then, beseech you to stand stedfast, calling on the name of the Lord; this is your special privilege, therefore you are exhorted to cast your burden upon him, "and he will sustain you." For your further encouragement, he saith, "Fear not, thou shalt not be ashamed; neither be thou confounded, for thy Maker is thine HUSBAND, the Lord of hosts is his name, and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel. The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit," and therefore he saith, "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted, for a small moment have I forsaken thee, but with great mercy will I gather thee." Then suffer me to ask,

Why heaves thy breast, or why these boding fears,

Whence all those sighs, or why these flowing tears,

Why all this grief, and all that furrow'd care,

Which drives LAVINIA into black despair?

Dry up thy tears—bid ev'ry fear subside,

To bear thy sins, thy God, thy Saviour dy'd.

Then set an exercise of faith subdue,
 Those futile hints, depraved nature drew ;
 Dispell thy doubts, and let experience prove
 The balmy sweets of Jesu's dying love.
 What tho' the boist'rous wind of trouble blow,
 And rolling waves of heart-felt sorrow flow,
 These storms of grief ere long shall all subside,
 And smiling peace in calm succession glide.

Then, my friend, be of good cheer ; surely you have abundant reason, for the Lord hath said, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and when through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee ; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee, for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, THY SAVIOUR. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee, for a moment ; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy upon thee ; the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee." Come then, "thou that art of a fearful heart, be strong, and fear not ; for the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to ZION with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads : they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away." They will have abundant reason to sing indeed. They will sing the song of electing, redeeming, calling, justifying, pardoning, and persevering grace. These delightful themes,

themes will fill their hearts with joy unspeakable, and be the sweet employ of their raptured tongues while traveling to the new Jerusalem. Ere long they will reach their desired haven, and swiftly pass Jordan's river, where there will be no doubts, no fears, no distracting cares to disturb their peaceful souls; for they will spend an eternity of blessedness free from pain, and every thing that might embitter their harmony of bliss. There will be no more occasion for sorrow and sighing, no more corruption of nature, no more sin, no more unbelief, no darkness, no loss of comfort, for God will wipe away their falling tears. O happy state, surely the distant prophet must cheer my drooping friend, and dissipate her gloomy fears! What are all the momentary trials which now distress the soul, when compared to an eternity of bliss! Those eyes, now drowned in penitential tears, have lost their wonted brightness; but when in that happy clime, they will shine with redoubled lustre: That breast, now tortured and opprest with sorrow, shall heave with rapturous joy: that tongue, now spent with wailing accents, shall sing the wonders of redeeming grace; and every aspiring note resound in louder strains the matchless praises of the Saviour's love.

I am, dear Madam,

Your affectionate friend,

And servant for Christ's sake.

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